

NOTES

NORTHERN SUDAN

Bisharin Fables

ABU el Hussein the fox, was very hungry ; it had been bad hunting for two nights. He was returning to a shady place among the rocks when an idea came to him. He threw himself out upon the ground and hoped the raven, thinking he was dead, would come within his reach. The raven soon flew over and saw Abu el Hussein, and after flying round, came down upon a stone, a distance off. He looked and shrugged his shoulders and then walked round and looked, and shrugged his shoulders from the other side. " Well ! " he said, " Well ! he sleeps, for were he dead, the wind would blow about his ears." Abu el Hussein began to move his ears with caution up and down. The raven with a loud Hah-Hoh, flew off.

Abu el Hussein was out late ; bad hunting had kept him from returning to his home, within the rocks, long after the sun was up. Passing a bush he saw a lizard sitting in its upper branches warming the night cold from his limbs. " Happy news ! lizard," said Abu el Hussein, sitting on his haunches and looking at the lizard with his tongue out. " Happy news ! there is peace between all the animals." The lizard moved nothing, stared in the same direction, and said nothing. " Lizard," shouted Abu el Hussein, " can't you hear the good tidings ? there is peace between all the animals." The lizard did nothing and said nothing. Abu el Hussein got annoyed. " Can't you hear ? " he said, " can't you answer ; what are you staring at ? " " Nothing," said the lizard, " only the man coming along over there with his dog." " What ! " shouted Abu el Hussein, in alarm and jumping up. " Only the man over there," said the lizard, " with his dog ; but don't bother, there is peace between all the animals." " I daresay," said Abu el Hussein, as he hurried off, " but he mightn't have heard about it."

The lion had just died, and the animals were holding a council to decide who should succeed. Some were for the Merafib (Hyena)

and some for the Abu el Husseini. Eventually Merafib was chosen. Merafib was pleased—was honoured, and he laughed. Abu el Husseini was annoyed; he despised Merafib. "You have chosen a foul feeder for your King," he said. "Merafib," cried the council with one voice, "you must give up that vile, obnoxious habit which you have of eating putrid meat." Merafib was distressed. "May I not even smell it?" he asked. "We can't help that," said the council. "What if when I've smelt it, I run towards it and jump over it," said Merafib, "any objection?" "No good," said the council, "if you once did that you'd eat." Merafib consented to restrict his pleasures to smelling putrid meat at a distance, but he was very sad. Abu el Husseini dragged an old friend who had died, to the windy side of the King and went his way. Merafib soon smelt, was tempted and rushed off to gorge his full. The council dismissed him and chose Abu el Husseini.

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Stories of the Gerarish

I. BLINDNESS

IN the golden light of the evening, and the long dark shadows of the trees on the river bank, the caravan of camels drew up to unload for the night. Some groans from the camels, and hurry among the men preparing for the night, and once again the spirit of the sunset hour, disturbed by man, returned. A blind man, with his long stick feeling the indent of a camel-track, passed by, hurrying towards some huts a mile or more to southward, nor would he stop for proffered hospitality from all the men.

The guide, the old Garaishi, white bearded, sitting on his farwa, smoothed out the sand before him and on the smoothed-out surface drew various figures with two fingers. "Blindness," he said, "is a distress, whether it be man, or beast or bird, that suffers, and many have sought its cure. Of one cure, however, I know, having heard it from an aged Dervish, a learned and worthy man. The vulture, alone of all the birds, knows of a tree that grows, standing solitary in the uttermost deserts. A twig of this tree will bring sight to any eye it touches."